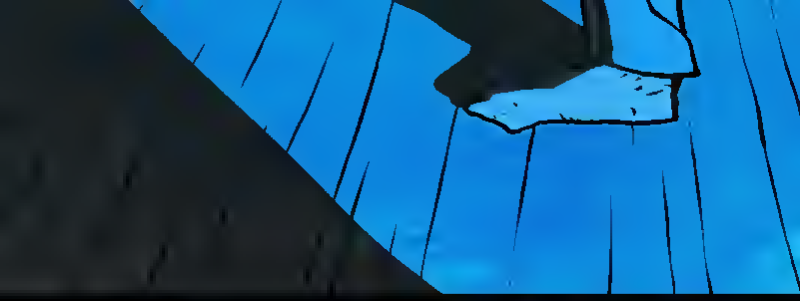
Shh!
Where are you going?



Sithrah

by

Jason Brubaker

They're going to hear you.

How am I supposed to tell a little girl something like that?

I've never been good at breaking bad news to anyone.

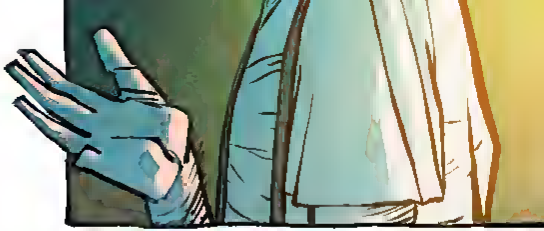
You always find a way to say the right thing, dear.

What if she wants a hug or something?

I'm not even sure what I saw...

"It all happened so fast." Henry paced the bedroom. "I followed the trail the night of the crash, but someone else had beat me to it.

"Looters and thugs, just taking what they wanted and trashing everything else.



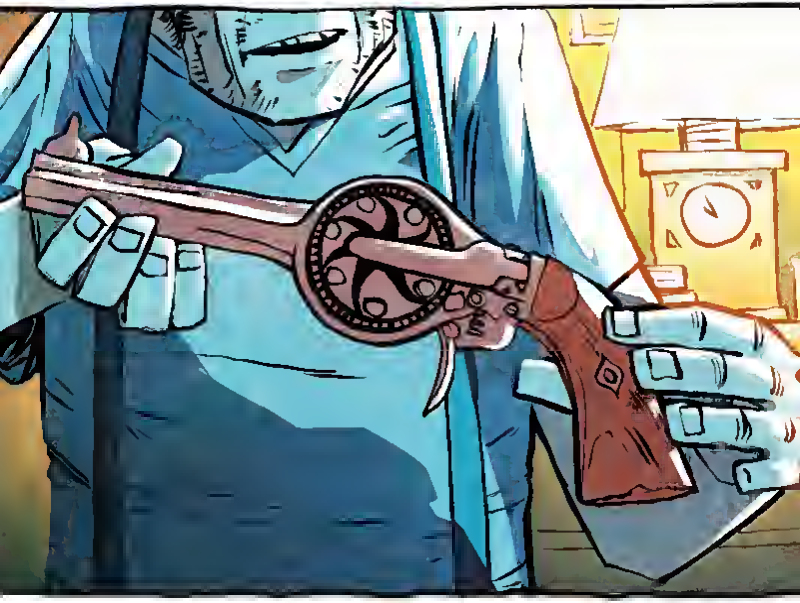
"It wasn't worth dying over, and I wasn't about to get involved. But just as I was turning around leave, I see them drag somebody out of the plane. I didn't know if he was alive or dead, but he was in bad shape either way.

"I can't say for sure if it was Vonna's dad, but who else would it BE?

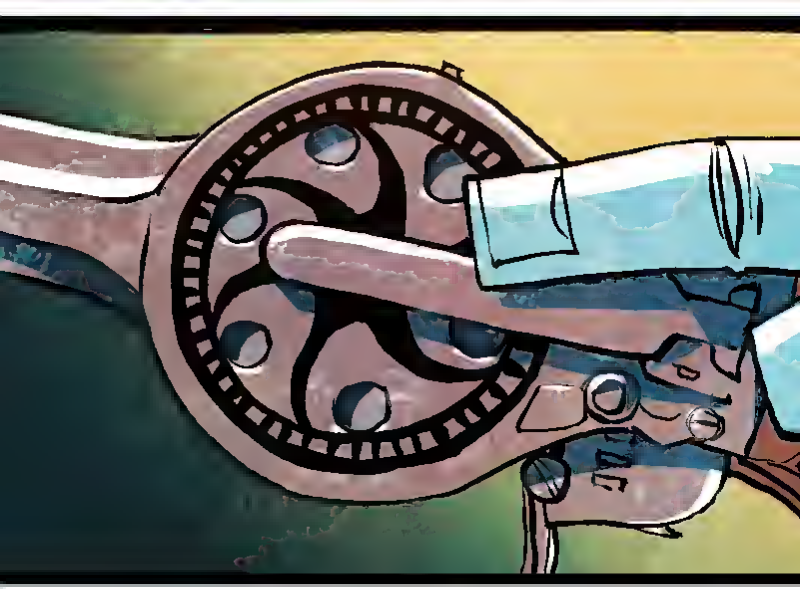
"Before I knew what I was doing, I fired a couple rounds into the air, hoping maybe they'd drop him and run away. I scared 'em off all right, but they loaded that guy into their truck before I could do anything else about it.

"They got out of there so fast, one of them even left his gun behind on the ground. Weird looking thing with some symbol on it.

"But that's not the strangest part. When I was talking to Dino after dinner, I noticed the tattoo on his shoulder...



"...and it's the same symbol as this one on the looters' gun."



"I've never seen anything like this. There's still one bullet inside, but I can't figure out how to open it up."

Phoebe looked up from her book, "It must be a misunderstanding. Dino's a wonderful boy -- I can't see him associating with thugs. Plus, what he did out there in the sands was so brave..."

What?

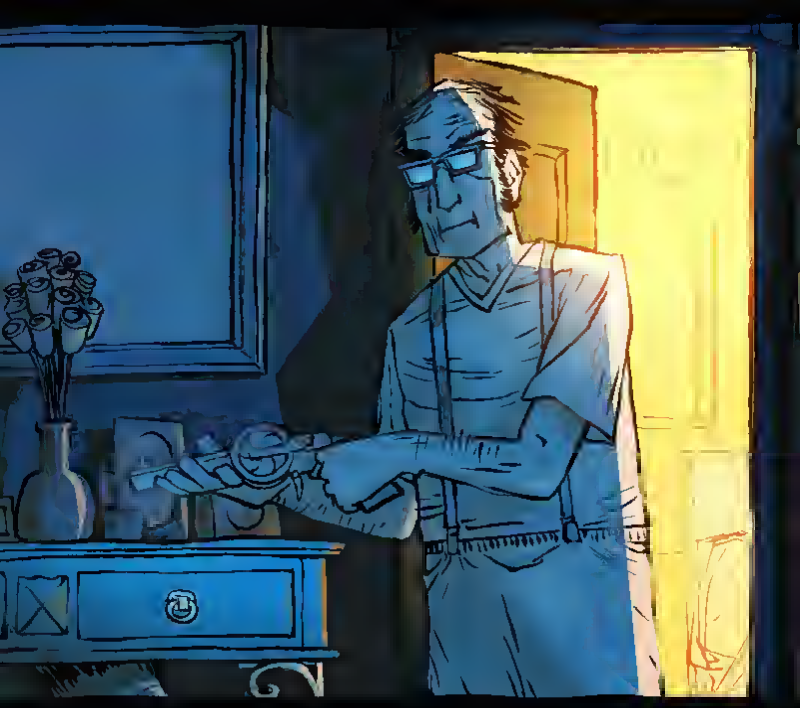
"None of this makes sense." Henry paced the floor, his eyebrows furrowed. "If Dino is involved with people like that, then Vonna might be in more trouble than she knows. I want to believe in him, but there's too much about Dino that we just don't know.

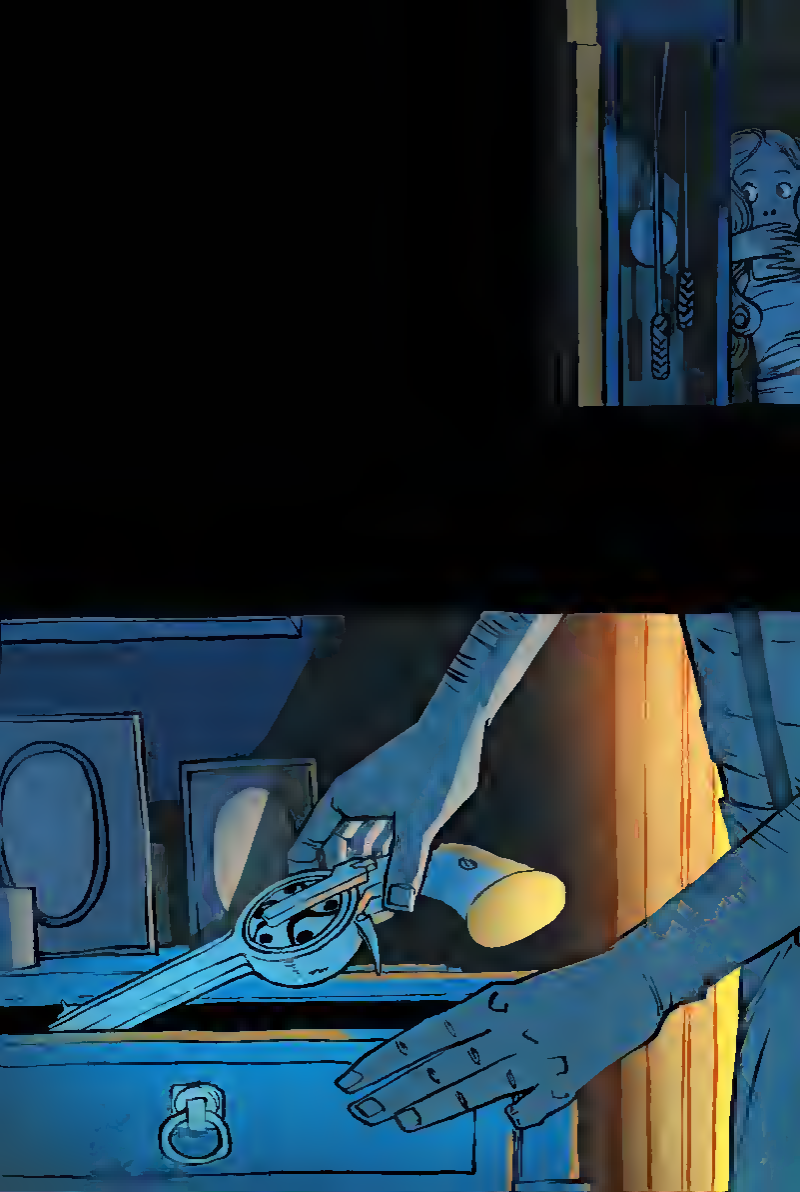
"I'll talk to the constable in the morning, see if he's heard anything."

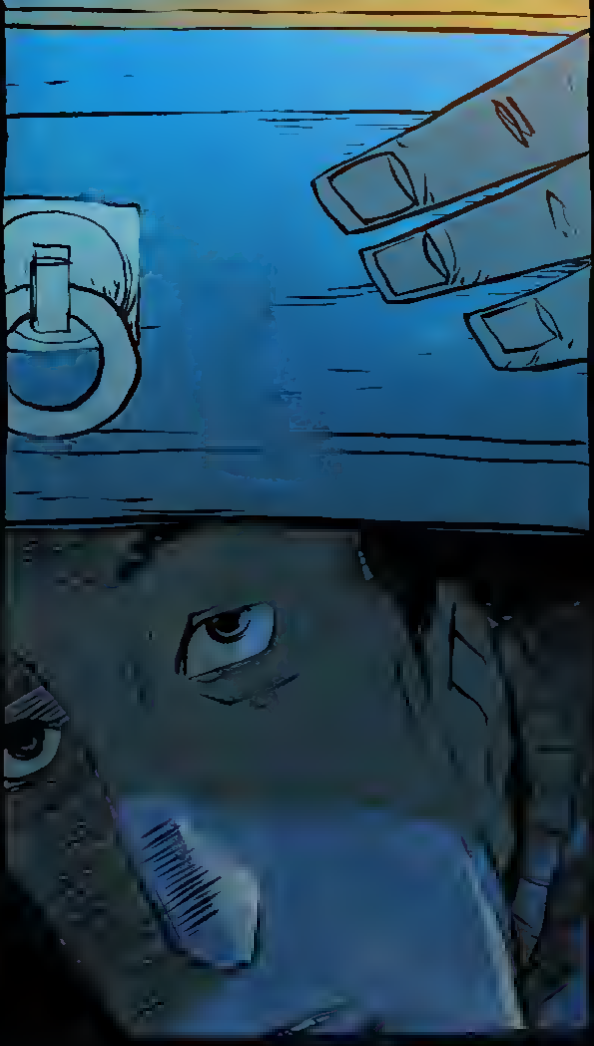
"We'll sort it all out." Phoebe patted the bed, "Don't let it keep you up all night."

But could you please go put that gun somewhere else?

I don't want to be sleeping right next to it.







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